HUMAN GEOGRAPHY & THE PRAIRIE CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

By

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Human Geography

…..How geography influences humans and how humans have influenced geography

Indigenous Peoples

- Last major glacier melted 10,000 to 12,000 years ago
- Glacier used up the world's water and lowered sea levels
- First humans crossed land bridge from Russia to Alaska
- Average life span was ~30 years
- 12,000/30 = 400 Generations of People have lived here !!

Where did Indigenous People have their villages?

- Usually on a creek or river
- Kickapoo had village of 650 people on Indian Creek south of Fairbury from 1828-1830
- Kickapoo moved to Oliver's Grove south of Chatsworth 1830-1832
- We forced them to leave the state in 1832. Went to Missouri, then other states & Mexico

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From Illinois State Museum diorama in Springfield

Why Settle on Creeks/Rivers?

- Water needed to drink and bathe
- Food – fish
- Timber for firewood for cooking and heat
- Protection against periodic massive Prairie Fires

Burial on Vermilion River

- In 1948, skeleton of a man discovered
- About 6 miles north of Fairbury
- Where South Branch of Vermilion intersects main branch of the vermilion
- Based upon artifacts buried with him, skeleton was about 1,000 years old

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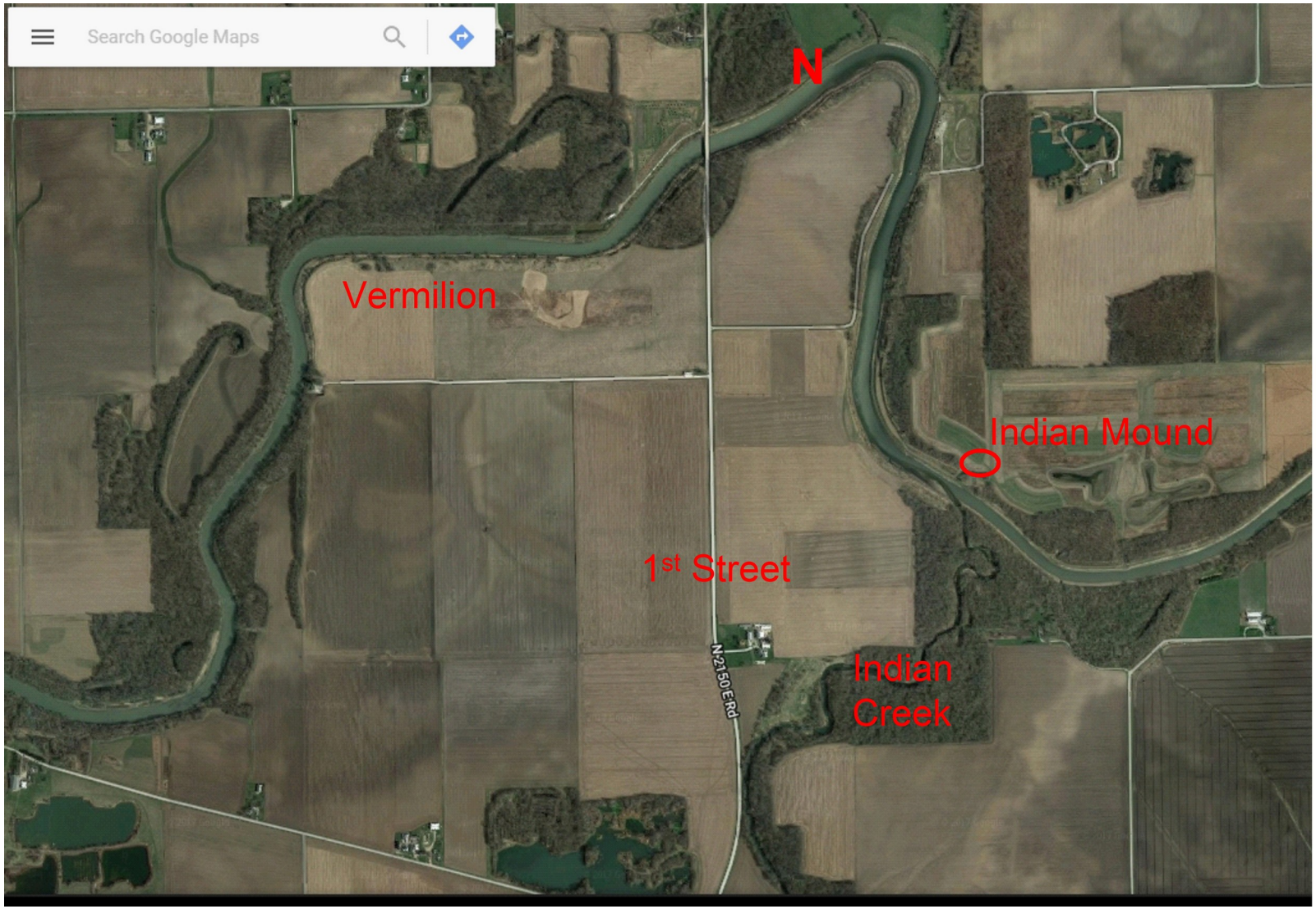

Where did 1st White Settlers Build their Log Cabins?

- In early 1800s, everyone **just knew** best site for a cabin was on a creek/river with timber
- Every first settler in the Prairie Central school district area chose their first home on a creek or River
  - Avoca Township
  - Indian Grove Township
  - Belle Prairie Township

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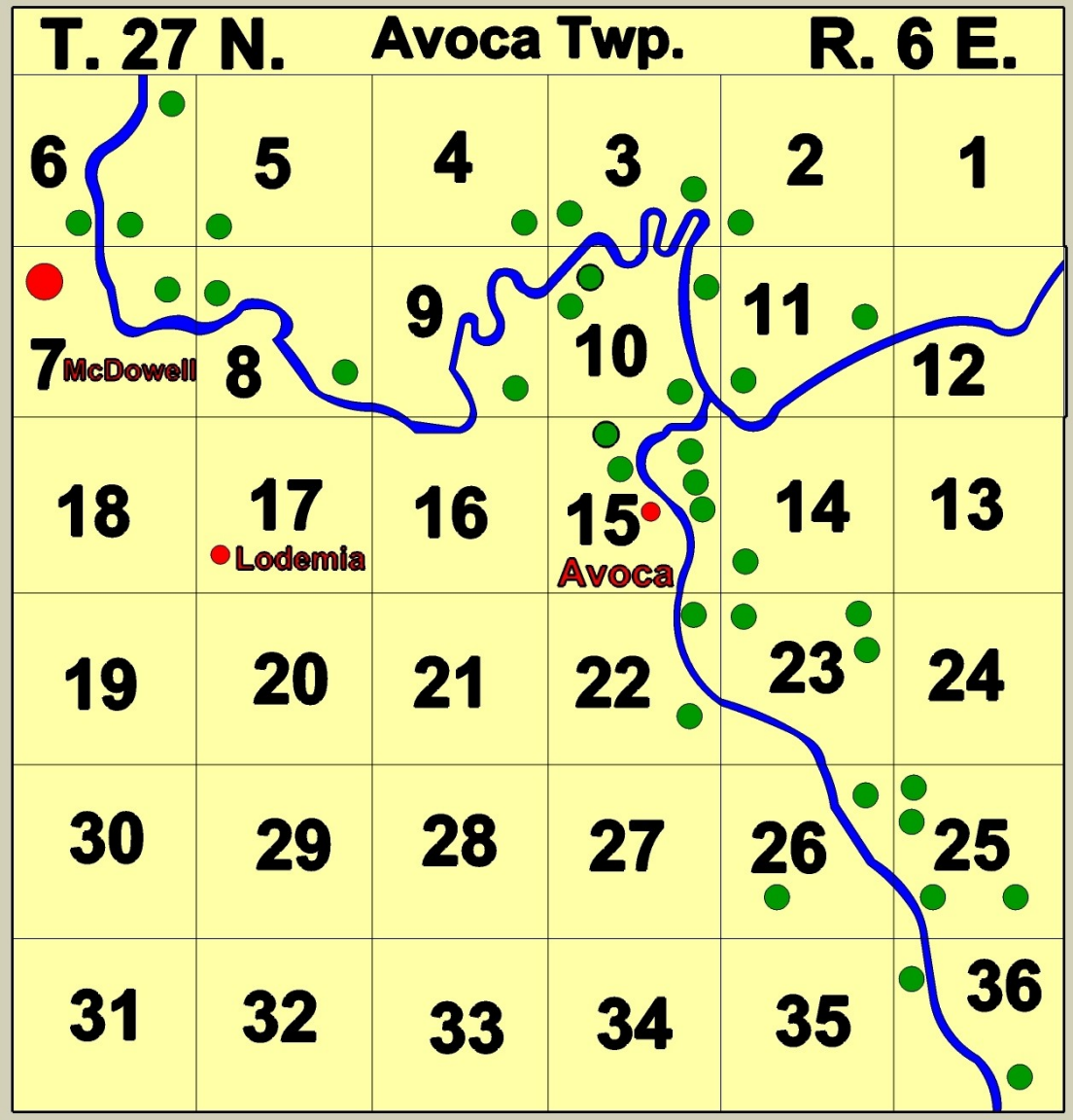

Avoca Township is north of Fairbury

Green dots are 1st settlers farms

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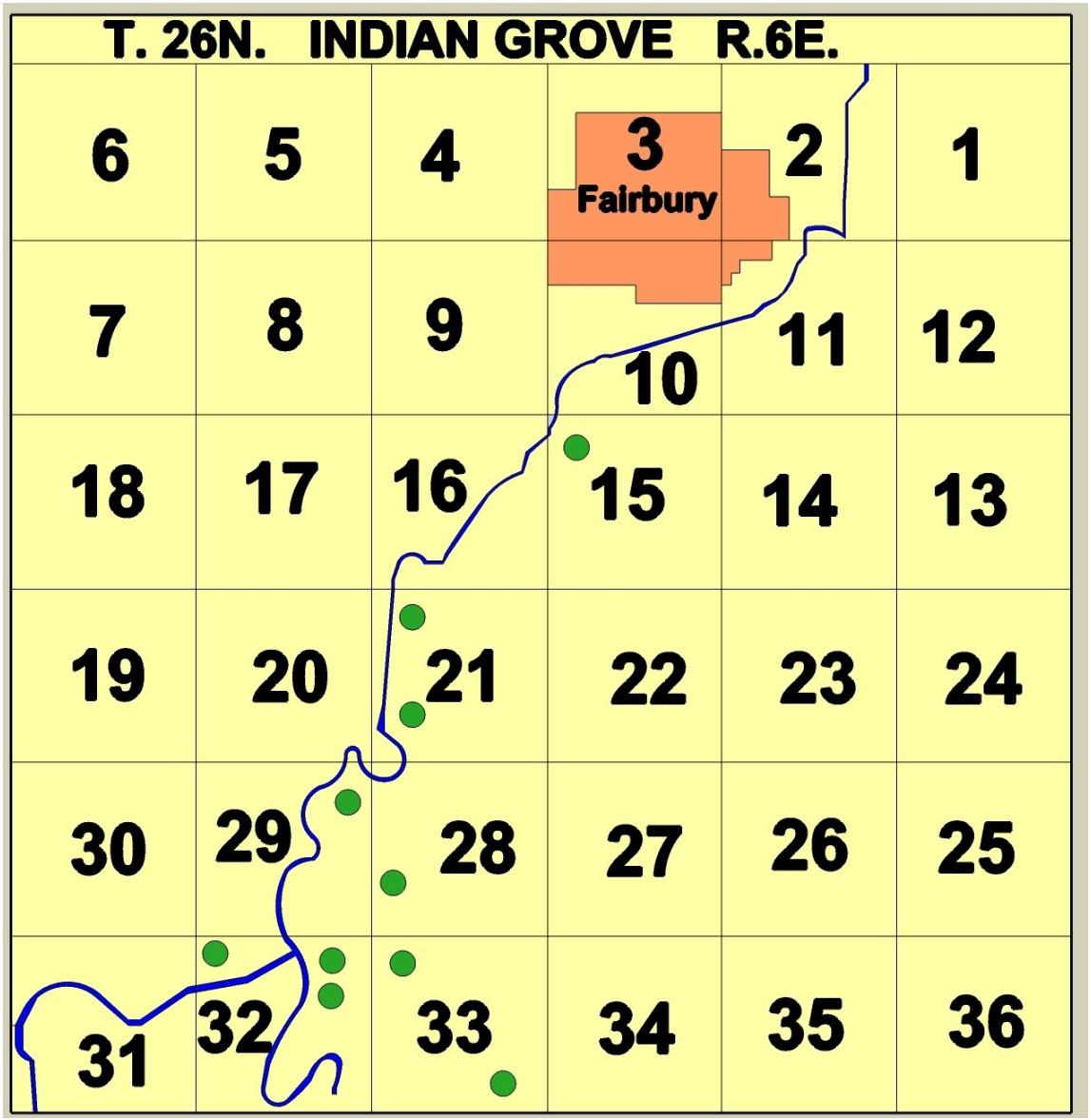

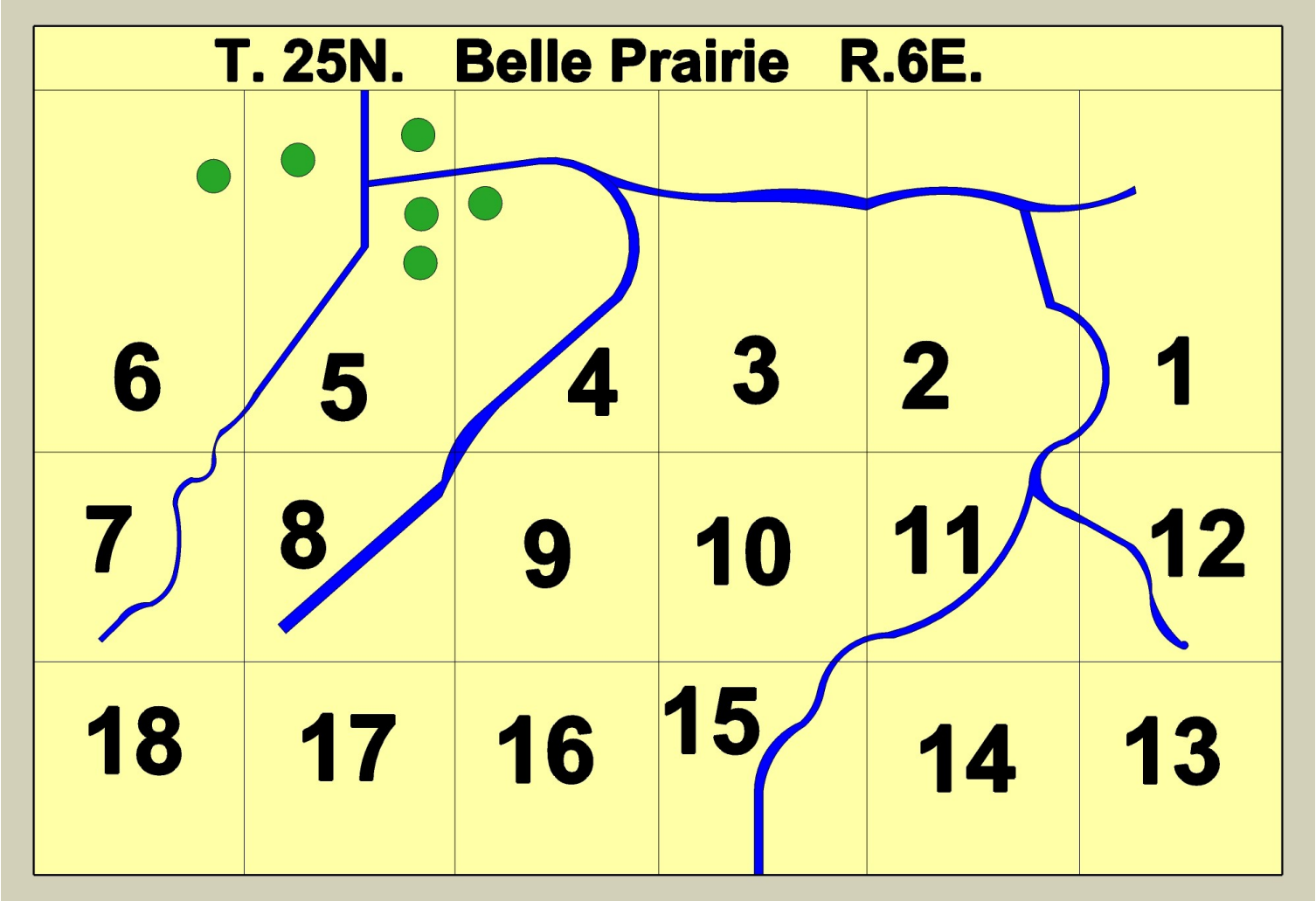

Belle Prairie Township is south of Fairbury

Why did 1st White Settlers Settle on Creeks/Rivers?

- Same reasons as the Indigenous Peoples
  - Water for drinking/bathing
  - Timber for fires for cooking/heat
  - Timber to build log cabins and barns
  - Protection against prairie fires until land was farmed
- Eventually, began to settle on the open prairie
  - Timber lands were all claimed

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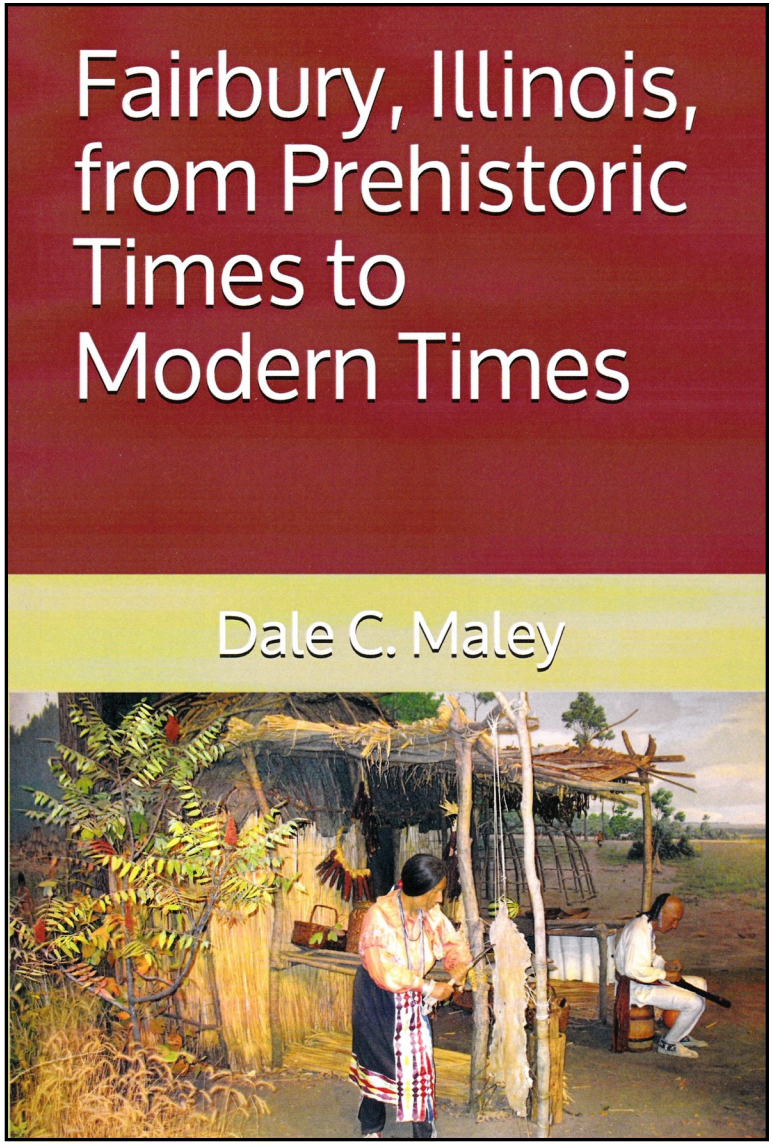

- More info on:
  - Native Americans
  - Early settlers
  - Glaciers

- Available at Fairbury Dominy Memorial Library
- Can be purchased at Fairbury Furniture in Walton Building or Amazon.com

How Did 1st White Settlers Change the Geography?

- **Good News:**
  - Glaciers flattened the land making it easy to farm

- **Bad News:**
  - Since land very flat, no hills for water to drain away
  - Most land very swampy
  - Crops often flooded, Malaria from mosquitos very common

1880s Tiling Revolution

- Clay was mined and formed into tubular pipe
- Fired in kilns to make hard
- Ditches dug and tile laid to form drainage pipes
- Tile drainage system set up to empty the water into creeks and rivers

- Clay tile converted worthless swampy land into the most productive farmland on the Planet !!

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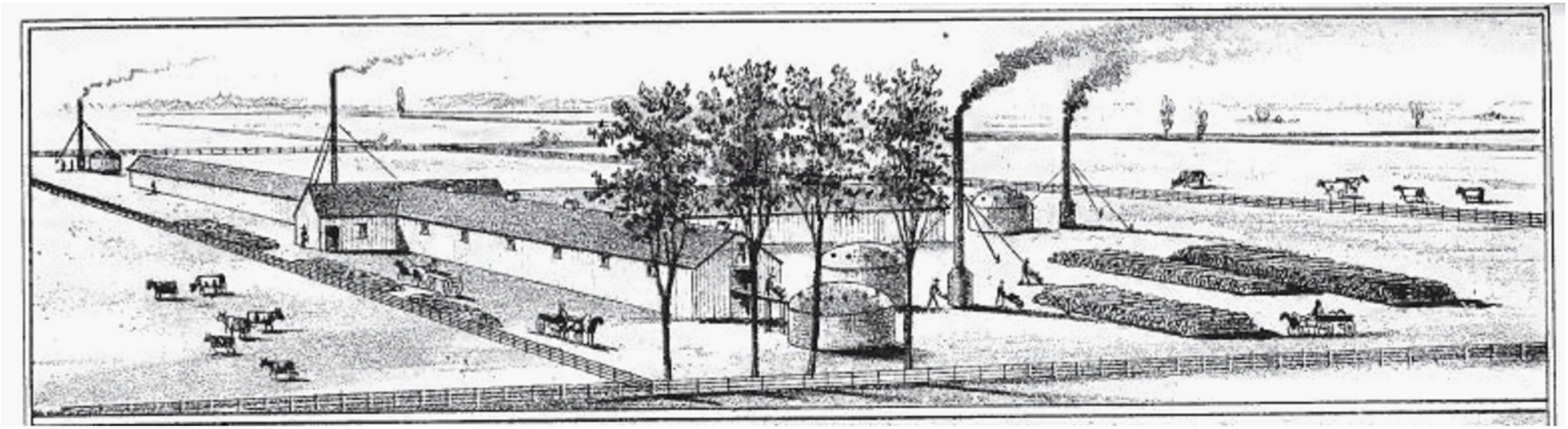
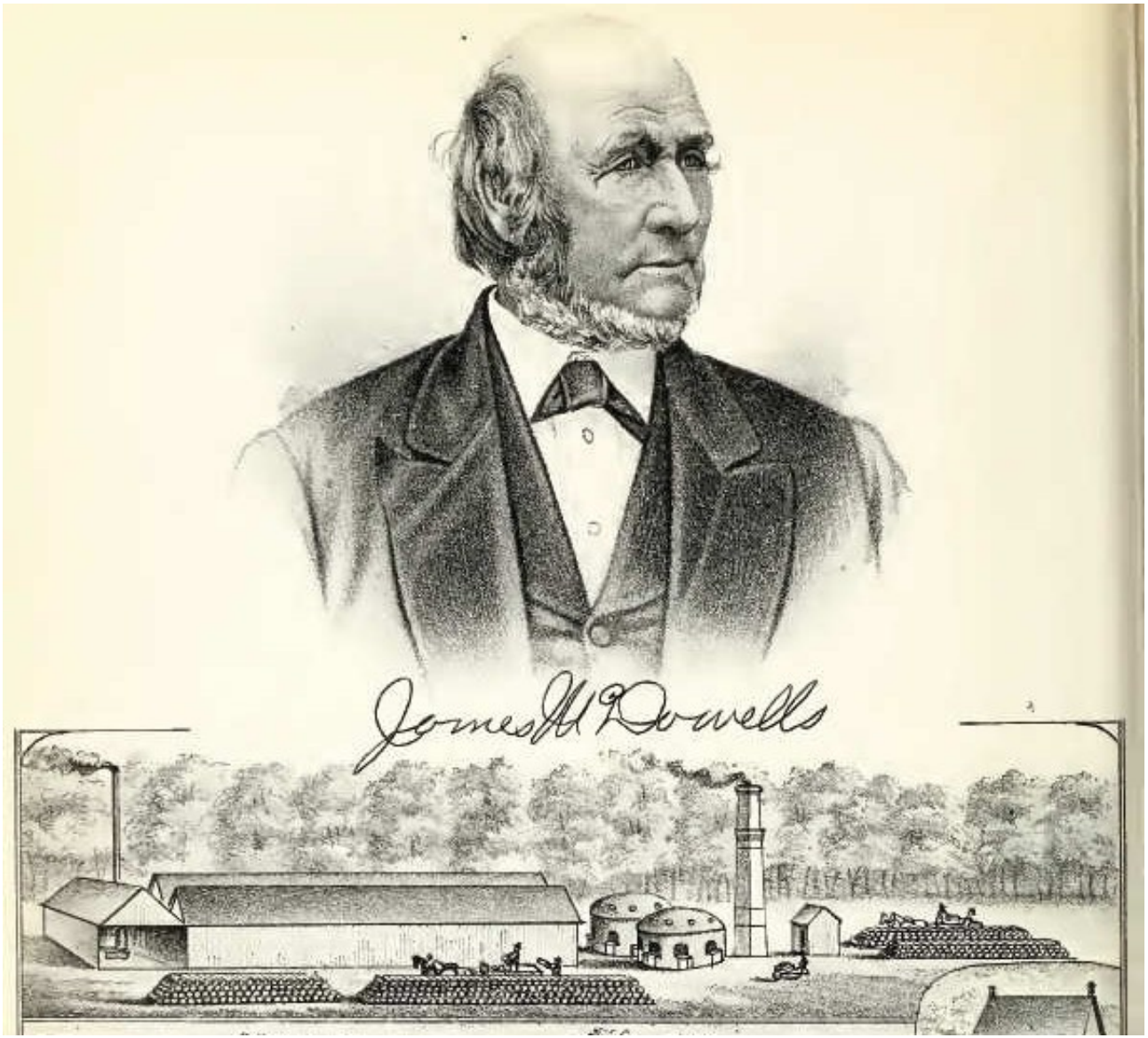


Massive tile factory in 1888 on the Rufus C. Straight farm west of Fairbury

- Tile factories built and boomed in the 1880s
  - Straight Tile factory in Fairbury
  - McDowell Tile factory in Fairbury
  - Diller Tile in Chatsworth (1881)



McDowell tile factory near Fairbury in 1888

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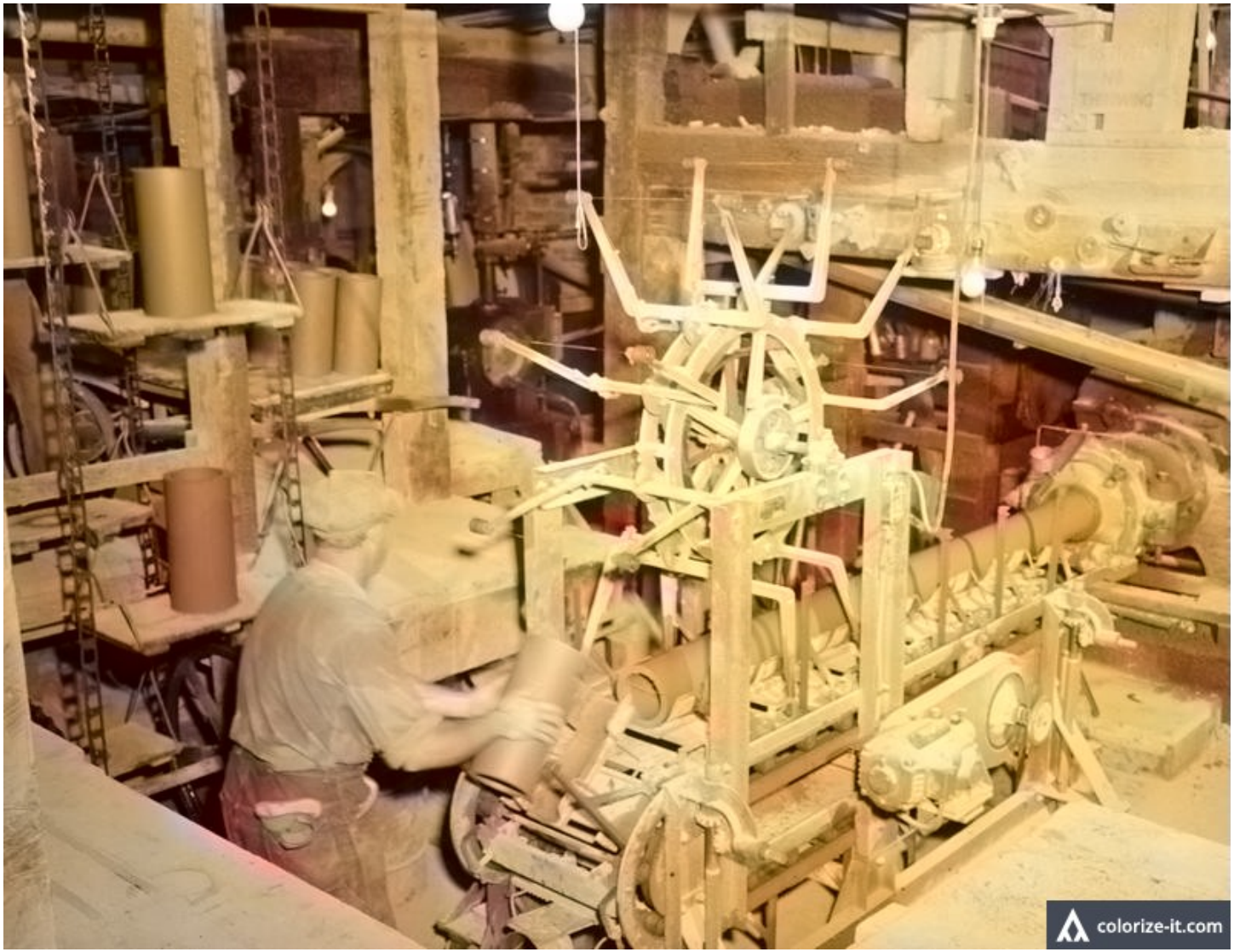

Extruded soft clay tile

1948 Diller tile

Pantagraph negative

1948 Diller Tile photo from Pantagraph Negative

Closing Thoughts

- Story of humans settling on creeks/rivers great example of geography impacting human development.

- Story of clay tile that converted swampland to most productive land on the planet great example of humans interacting with and changing their physical environment.

Questions?